



SHARP News

USPSTF Updates Recommendations for Chlamydia Screening

An excerpt from **Quality Research for Quality Healthcare**

press release for Tuesday, April 17, 2001,

U.S. PREVENTIVE SERVICES TASK FORCE CALLS FOR
CHLAMYDIA, LIPID SCREENING AMONG FIRST FOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

"In its first set of recommendations, the third **U.S. Preventive Services Task Force** (USPSTF) today recommended that primary care clinicians screen all sexually active women ages 25 and younger, as well as older women at risk for chlamydia, as part of regular health care visits.

"So many of our health problems can be avoided through healthy lifestyles and preventive health care," said HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson. "These screening recommendations are an important step in our efforts to improve the quality of health care and quality of life for all Americans."

Chlamydia is the most common bacterial sexually transmitted disease in the United States, with an estimated 3 million new cases each year. Most women have no symptoms when initially infected, but if not treated, can develop pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility and other serious health problems, including increased risk of HIV infection. Although chlamydia is most common in women 25 and younger, older women can also be at risk for chlamydia if they have a new or multiple sexual partners, have had a sexually transmitted disease in the past, or do not use condoms consistently and correctly. In addition, treatment with antibiotics is easy and effective. The USPSTF recommendation is particularly important because data indicate that many women are not being screened. According to a survey of 546 doctors reported in the March 2001 *Journal of Adolescent Health*, only 32 percent said they would screen an asymptomatic sexually active teenage girl for chlamydia as part of a routine gynecologic examination. A 1997 study of four major U.S. health plans indicated that only 2 percent to 42 percent of sexually active females aged 15 to 25 years had been screened for chlamydia.

The USPSTF, a panel of independent, private-sector experts in prevention and primary care, made its recommendation after concluding that there is good scientific evidence that routine screening and treatment could reduce serious consequences of chlamydia in women."

Note: The **Armed Forces Epidemiological Board** issued very similar recommendations (AFEB Memorandum (15-1a) 99-1, 25 May 99) for chlamydia screening of women. This memorandum also includes recommendations for screening of male patients.

For more information about this press release, contact:

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

2101 East Jefferson Street, Rockville, MD 20852 · 301-594-1364 · www.ahrq.gov

Contact: AHRQ Public Affairs, (301) 594-1364

"Chart a Safe Course"

Sexual Health and Responsibility Program (SHARP)

Navy Environmental Health Center, Health Promotion, 2510 Walner Ave, Norfolk VA 23513-2617
(757) 462-5566 (DSN 253) fax: DSN 444-1345 <http://www-nehc.med.navy.mil/hp/sharp>